

PIXIE HOLLOW TALES



# Rani and the Three Treasures





# Rani and the Three Treasures



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## *All About Fairies*



IF YOU HEAD toward the second star on your right and fly straight on till morning, you'll come to Never Land, a magical island where mermaids play and children never grow up.

When you arrive, you might hear something like the tinkling of little bells. Follow that sound and you'll find Pixie Hollow, the secret heart of Never Land.

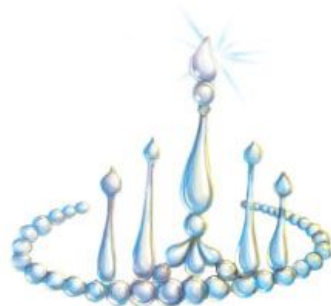
A great old maple tree grows in Pixie Hollow, and in it live hundreds of fairies and sparrow men. Some of them can do water magic, others can fly like the wind, and still others can speak to animals. You see, Pixie Hollow is the Never faires' kingdom, and each fairy who lives there has a special, extraordinary talent.

Not far from the Home Tree, nestled in the branches of a hawthorn, is Mother Dove, the most magical creature of all. She sits on her egg, watching over the fairies, who in turn watch over her. For as long as Mother Dove's egg stays well and whole, no one in Never Land will ever grow old.

Once, Mother Dove's egg *was* broken. But we are not telling the story of the egg here. Now it is time for Rani's tale....







“OH, NO!”

Prilla held up her hand and let the water splash into her palm. “Rain! The day is ruined. Hurry, let’s get back to the Home Tree before my wings get wet.” She fanned her wings and began to lift off from the ground.

Rani took Prilla’s hand and tugged her back. “Don’t be silly,” she said with a laugh. “Rainy days are just as much fun as sunny days.”

Prilla frowned. “I don’t see how. If your wings get wet, you can’t fly. And if you can’t fly, then...” Prilla broke off. “Oh, Rani. I’d fly backward if I could. I forgot.”

“Don’t worry.” Rani smiled. She knew her friend Prilla would never hurt her feelings on purpose. All fairies loved to fly. Rani was the only fairy in Pixie Hollow who couldn’t. But Rani wasn’t unhappy. She was too full of life.

The rain began to fall faster. Prilla covered her face. She flinched as each heavy drop struck her.

But Rani was a water-talent fairy. To her, every raindrop felt like a kiss. Rani loved the water, and the water loved her.

“Watch this, Prilla!” Rani ran as fast as she could toward a puddle. She skidded into the puddle, and the water formed a geyser that lifted her up as

if she were on a pedestal. It twirled her around. “Wheee!” Rani cried.

Prilla clapped her hands. “Rani! Can you make it do that for me?”

“Sure! Come on in,” she urged.

Prilla lowered her head and ran splashing into the puddle, just as she had seen Rani do. Rani stretched her arms out to the water. It moved toward her like iron to a magnet. She threw her arms up like a conductor signaling an orchestra.





*Voilà!* The water created a second geyser that lifted Prilla into the air until she was level with Rani.

Rani laughed. “Now let’s seesaw!” The twin water pedestals began to move. Up and down. Up and down. Prilla up. Rani down. Rani up. Prilla down.

Soon both the fairies were laughing so hard, they were in danger of falling off their water pedestals. “Water down,” Rani commanded, lowering her arms.

The twin geysers gently subsided. Rani looked down at a shallow puddle spreading out before her feet. She leaned over and grasped the edges of the puddle with her hands. Then she pulled up a sheet of water as if it were a bolt of silvery silk.

She wrapped it around herself like a shimmering cloak. The water gleamed and glittered. It reflected the trees, the sky, and the astonished sparkle in Prilla’s eyes.

“How beautiful!” Prilla gasped. “You look like a queen.”

Rani held out her hands and quickly caught a raindrop. She held her hands over Prilla’s head and let it drip through her fingers. Each droplet was like a tiny diamond. The drops stacked up on Prilla’s head and formed a glittering water tiara.

“Now you need a dress to go with that tiara. Water sequins, I think.” Rani pulled off her water cape and twirled it in the air. The silky sheet of water broke into a thousand silvery drops. They rained back down on Prilla, clinging to her arms, legs, and torso. Within seconds, Prilla was covered in a sparkling gown of water sequins, complete with a long train.



Prilla took a hesitant step. She expected the watery gown and crown to immediately drip away. But when she moved, they moved with her.

“Rani, you are amazing!” said Prilla. “No wonder you love the water. Believe it or not, I hope it rains again—”

“—tomorrow?” Rani said with a laugh. She had a habit of finishing her friends’ sentences for them. “I wish that every day. But rain is rare in Pixie Hollow.”

“Wouldn’t it be wonderful if you could make it rain whenever—”

“—I wanted? Yes! I can’t imagine anything more fun.” Rani turned her face up and watched the clouds drift away. It *would* be wonderful to make it rain whenever she wanted. In fact, Rani had been thinking about that for a long time.

Just then, Rani saw a small rain cloud trailing behind the other clouds. Its fluffy edges gleamed silver against the late afternoon sun.

If Rani wanted her own personal rain cloud, that little cloud would be the perfect one. Rani pressed her lips together, thinking.

“I’m getting cold,” Prilla said. She shook off her watery finery. “I’m going inside to dry off. I’ll see you—”

“—later.” Rani waved as Prilla walked back to the Home Tree, where the fairies lived.

Prilla was the only mainland-visiting clapping-talent fairy in Pixie Hollow. In a blink, she could transport herself to the mainland where Clumsies—that is, humans—lived and urge them to clap to show they believed in fairies.

Everyone in Pixie Hollow had been amazed and surprised to discover that Prilla had such an unusual talent. But after a very short time, they stopped being amazed and surprised and took it very much for granted. After all, why *wouldn’t* a fairy have an unusual talent?

Never Land was an amazing and surprising place with more kinds of magic than anyone could ever understand or imagine. But it was their talents that made the fairies so special. A talent was a kind of magic. And Rani’s water talent seemed to be getting stronger and stronger every day. Her relationship to water, and all things made from it, was becoming more personal.

Maybe it was because she couldn’t fly. Maybe Rani took all the passion that the other fairies devoted to their flying and devoted it instead to her talent.

Rani watched the clouds disappear into the distance. The smallest one with the gleaming edges trailed behind. There was something Rani had wanted to try for a long time. Something that would test the power of her talent.

*Now, Rani decided boldly. Now is the time!*





RANI RACED UP the spiral stairs inside the trunk of the Home Tree. She ran down the hallway. Her room was located at the very end of one of the longest branches.

Once she was in her room, Rani hurried to the window. She parted the seaweed curtains and peered out.

Rani's room was always damp, which was exactly how she liked it. A permanent leak in the ceiling dripped into a tub made from a human-sized thimble. A Never minnow swam happily in the tub.

Rani listened hard as the water splashed into the thimble. Water spoke a magic language full of dots, plops, plinks, and gurgles. Rani felt as if the water were speaking directly to her. She could hear it encouraging her. It was telling her exactly how to coax the little gray rain cloud back to Pixie Hollow.

Rani fixed her gaze on the cloud and leaned out the window as far as she dared. She stretched out her arms and began to imitate the sounds of the dots, plops, plinks, and gurgles. She called out to the cloud, speaking the language of water.

The little cloud with the shining silver silhouette seemed to pause. Then, drawn by the sound of Rani's voice, it began to move toward her.

While the rest of the clouds moved on, little by little the small cloud came drifting back toward the Home Tree.

Rani put every drop of her strength into her water spell. Finally, the cloud hovered right over the branch of the Home Tree where Rani's room was perched.

Exhausted, Rani sank back onto her bed. She listened to the rain patter on the ground outside. She felt the gray watery mist of the cloud come in through the window. It surrounded her like a soft, moist blanket. Her eyelids fluttered, and she fell asleep.



Rani awoke with a start. The sun shone on her face. She found herself looking out the window at a clear blue sky.

“Why! I fell asleep in my clothes,” she said.

She pulled the seaweed curtain aside and looked out at the sunny day. There wasn't a rain cloud in sight.

Rani realized that she had been dreaming. She couldn't help feeling disappointed. Having her own little rain cloud would have been wonderful.

She hurried downstairs. As she stepped outside to look for Brother Dove, she heard someone call to her.

“Yoo-hoo! Rani!”

Rani looked up. She saw Prilla waving from the window of her own room in the Home Tree.

Prilla flew out the window and landed lightly on the ground beside Rani. “I had such a good time playing in the rain yesterday. I was almost disappointed when I woke up and saw—”

“—the sun?” Rani finished for her. “Me, too. In fact, you'll laugh when I tell you what I dreamed.”

Rani told Prilla all about her dream. Prilla giggled at the idea of Rani having a cloud of her own. “What a shame it turned out to be a dream,” she said. “But don't be too disappointed. Sunny days might not be as much fun as rainy days, but they're good for getting things done. What shall we do today?”



As they stood chatting in the soft, yellow morning sunlight, a shadow slowly moved overhead. It blocked out the sun. Moments later, a raindrop splashed down next to them.



Rani looked up and drew in her breath. Hovering overhead was a small gray cloud.

“Prilla! It’s the cloud from my dream!” Rani exclaimed.

“It can’t be,” Prilla said.

“It is!” Rani argued. “I know it. I feel it. It’s my very own cloud. Oh, Prilla! It wasn’t a dream. I am so lucky!”

Suddenly, Rani heard an odd sound. It sounded like laughter. But it also sounded like water moving through a pipe. “Did you hear that noise?” she asked Prilla.

“I heard a gurgling sound,” Prilla replied.

Rani looked down and saw water collecting in a hole next to a root. The water bounced around in the hollow, bubbling and frothing. “I guess that’s what we heard.” She turned her face up and spread her arms, welcoming the rain. “Just think,” she said to Prilla. “Now I can take a walk in the rain every single day, and nobody else has to get wet.”

Prilla flew a few feet to the side so she was out of the cloud’s shadow. The drizzle fell only on Rani. Prilla laughed. “How perfect. Come on, let’s walk to Havendish Stream and see if it follows.”

The two fairies began walking toward the stream. All the while, the little rain cloud hovered over Rani and showered her. Some drops plopped on her head, as if the cloud were teasing her and trying to get her to join in a game. Rani broke into a run, trying to escape the drops. The little cloud chased her. It pounded the top of her head with water. Finally, she gave up and slowed down.

Soon Rani and Prilla were laughing so hard they could hardly move. Once again, Rani heard the sound of strange laughter. This time it sounded like water rushing out of a faucet into a copper pot.

Rani began to get an odd feeling. Someone—or *something*—was watching them. But who? What?

Then suddenly, out of the corner of her eye, Rani saw a figure zip from one flower to another.

Rani pretended not to see. And she didn’t say anything to Prilla. She was already planning a way to catch the spy.

“Come on, Prilla,” she said in a loud voice. “I’ll race you to Havendish Stream.” Rani broke into a run. Prilla chased behind her, flying a few inches overhead. Then, without warning, Rani came to a sudden stop and whirled around.

Prilla shot past her. “Hey!” she cried out in surprise.

Rani kept her eyes focused on one spot. Whoever it was, or whatever it was, froze. It stood perfectly still, hoping to blend into the background. But Rani’s eyes were keen. “I see you,” she said.

Rani heard a mischievous giggle. It sounded like a bucket splashing down into a well. “If you can see me, I guess there’s no point in hiding,” the strange creature said. It stepped forward.

Prilla flew over and landed on the ground next to Rani. “What is it?”  
Prilla whispered.



It *looked* like a fairy, but it wasn't. For one thing, it had no wings. In fact, it had no body either. It was a transparent, shimmering figure made of clear water. When it stood still, it was almost invisible. But when it moved, its watery form reflected the sky, the trees, and the flowers.

Rani stared at the remarkable creature. "Who are you? And why are you following us?"

The watery figure laughed. The noise sounded like water splashing in a fountain.

"My name is Dab," the creature said. "I'm a water sprite. *And that's my cloud.*"





“*YOUR* CLOUD!” Rani cried.

Dab nodded. “Yes. My cloud.”

Rani was horrified. “Oh, dear. I didn’t know it belonged to anyone. You can have it back. I would never have called it to me if I had known.”

Dab laughed. It sounded like water swirling around a rock in a stream. “I’ve been following you,” she said. “I wanted to see what kind of a cloud keeper you would be. You really have a way with rain clouds.” Dab wickered this way and that, reflecting colors like a prism. “Clouds are sensitive creatures. You must be a very special water creature yourself.”

Rani blushed with pleasure. “Well, I am a water-talent fairy. That’s why I was able to call the cloud. I guess it’s also why I could see you when you were standing still.” She sighed. “I’ll miss having my own cloud. It is such a treasure. I can’t help feeling envious.”

Dab shimmered. “Surely you fairies have treasures of your own?”

Rani laughed. “Oh, yes. Of course. But nothing as wonderful as a rain cloud.”

“Maybe you would like to look after the cloud for me?” Dab suggested.



“You mean the cloud could stay?” Prilla asked, her eyes wide. She turned to Rani. “Wouldn’t that be fantastic?”

Dab chuckled. It sounded like water pouring from a watering can. “Would you promise to be a good cloud keeper?” she asked Rani.

“Of course,” Rani replied.

“Promise on your talent,” Dab challenged.

“I promise on my talent,” Rani said promptly.

Dab smiled and shimmered. “Good! I now pronounce you the official cloud keeper. But there are a couple of things you should know. Clouds need a lot of attention. Someone must lead them and watch over them. Otherwise, they get nervous and fidgety. If they get riled up, they make a tremendous ruckus. Thunder. Lightning. Wind. Sleet. Hail. Even the little ones like that”—she pointed her transparent thumb toward the sky—“will make trouble if they get upset.”

In the distance, Rani saw something in the sky. Lots of great, big, fat, fluffy, gray rain clouds moving in her direction.

“Ummm...” Rani pointed to the sky. “What are those?”

“The rest of my clouds,” said Dab.

“Why are they coming this way?” Rani asked.

“Because you’re the official cloud keeper now,” Dab replied. “From now on, wherever *you* go, *they* go.”



“I can’t keep them *all!*” Rani cried.

Dab chuckled. “You have to. You promised. You promised on your talent.”

“But...but...I thought I was promising to keep *one*. One small one.”

“Where one goes, the others follow,” Dab explained.

“You didn’t tell me that,” Rani protested angrily.

“You didn’t ask.”

“You tricked me,” Rani accused.

Dab laughed. It sounded like water hammering on a tin roof. “Yes, I did. I’ve been keeping watch over those clouds for the longest time. I’ll be glad to have a holiday.”

“A holiday? What kind of a holiday?”

“I’d like to see Never Land in the sunshine. When you travel with rain clouds, you never really get a good sense of the scenery. So I thought I would do a little sightseeing.”

By now the entire sky was filled with dark gray clouds. A heavy rain began to fall. Rani had to shout to be heard over it. “But when will you be back?”

Dab laughed. “That depends on you.”

“Me?”

Dab nodded. “You told me you have no treasure as wonderful as a rain cloud. But actually, the fairies of Pixie Hollow have three wonderful treasures—treasures that everyone would envy and want to possess. When you guess what those three treasures are, you must name them out loud and then say, *‘I wish you back! I wish you back! I wish you back!’* Until then... you’re in charge.”

And with that, Dab disappeared into the air.



It was a long, wet walk back to the Home Tree. Prilla’s wings were so heavy with rain she couldn’t get off the ground—not even with double sprinkles of fairy dust.

Rani looked up at the sky. The gray clouds hovered overhead. Sometimes they dropped gentle rain. Sometimes they dropped heavy rain. And sometimes they just contented themselves with being damp.

“What are we going to do now?” Prilla asked.

Rani noticed that Prilla had asked what are *we* going to do, and not what are *you* going to do. She felt grateful that her friend wanted to help her.



“Well,” Rani said, “I must say, I don’t think Dab’s riddle is very challenging. Pixie Hollow has lots of treasures. It shouldn’t take us long to guess them. Mother Dove’s egg is one.” Mother Dove’s egg was what kept the creatures in Never Land from growing old.

“What about Queen Clarion’s crown?” Prilla suggested.

“Yes! That’s two. Maybe Mother Dove is the third. Let’s see if we’re right.” Rani lifted her voice. “Hear me, Dab, wherever you are. In the name of Pixie Hollow’s three treasures—the blue egg, Mother Dove, and Queen Clarion’s crown—I wish you back...I wish you back...I wish you back!”

Rani and Prilla stood very still, waiting for Dab to appear.

But nothing happened except that a big, fat raindrop fell and splashed on Rani's head. "Okay," she chirped, refusing to worry. "It may be a little harder than I thought."

"We will figure it out," Prilla said.

In spite of the chilly rain, a wave of happiness warmed Rani from head to toe. She was glad Prilla was such a good friend.





TWO DAYS LATER, it was still raining. As Rani sat drinking tea, she couldn't help noticing that the tearoom was full of glum fairies.

Rani reached out and took a crumpet from the breadbasket. The crumpet bent slightly, then broke off. It landed with a *plop* right in her cup of tea.

Dulcie, who had baked the crumpets, sighed impatiently. "Every single piece of pastry is soggy. And there's nothing we can do about it with the weather so damp."

A laundry-talent fairy folded her arms over her chest. "We've got piles and piles of wet laundry. But we can't hang it out to dry until the rain stops."

"I don't understand it," said Iridessa, a light-talent fairy. "Usually Pixie Hollow only gets as much rain as it needs. But we've had a good bit more than we need. In fact, we're having too much. The roots of the Home Tree are so wet the fairies on the first floor are complaining of rising damp."



Rani said nothing. The first day of rain had been fun—at least for her and Prilla. The other fairies had seemed to enjoy the rainy day, too. Many had spent the time reading, chatting, and tidying their work spaces.

But by the end of the second day, the mood had worsened. In the kitchen, the cooking- and baking-talent fairies exchanged harsh words. The light-talent fairies were exhausted from trying to keep the hallways and workplaces lit. And the coiffure talents had given up in despair. In this kind of weather, they said, curls were impossible to tame. So they hung up a sign that read FAIRIES EXPERIENCING BAD HAIR ARE ADVISED TO WEAR A HAT UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

Rani listened to the unhappy voices. If the other fairies ever found out that it was her fault the rain clouds were hanging around, it would be awful.



Prilla entered the tearoom and made her way over to Rani. “Any ideas?” she whispered.

Rani sighed. She had been racking her brains all night.

Kyto the dragon had a collection of rare objects far more priceless than anything in Pixie Hollow. Hook had chests full of pirate bounty, and the mermaids had the lovely treasures of the sea. What treasures did the fairies have that none of the others did?

Rani thought about her wings. She had asked Prilla to cut them off so she could swim in the ocean with the mermaids. It had been part of the quest to save Mother Dove and her blue egg.

As soon as she'd cut her wings off, they'd turned into tiny jeweled marvels. Those wings—those *treasures*—had helped to save Never Land. Rani had given them to Kyto in exchange for his help.

Rani had never regretted giving away her wings—until now. Maybe the wings were one of the treasures Dab described.

Rani shook her head. No, that couldn't be it. Her wings weren't part of Pixie Hollow. They belonged to Kyto now.

It was clear to Rani that she and Prilla would have to go on a treasure hunt. But in the meantime, maybe there was a short-term solution.



Rani went outside and whistled for Brother Dove. He swooped down from a nearby branch. *Poor thing*, Rani thought. He was wet from head to toe.

“Maybe we can create a little dry time for Pixie Hollow,” Rani told Brother Dove. “The clouds will follow where we lead. So let’s head for the caves and see if we can lose them there.”

Brother Dove took to the sky and headed north. Rani looked behind her. Sure enough, here came the flock of gray rain clouds. They trailed at a distance, but they moved with steady purpose.

Rani indicated to Brother Dove that he should change direction. Brother Dove flew below the rain clouds and headed the opposite way.

“Faster,” Rani urged. Brother Dove beat his wings harder.

Rani looked back and saw the clouds swiftly reverse their direction. They were determined to follow.

Then Rani spotted a cave in the side of a hill. “Let’s hide and see what happens. Maybe they’ll just drift away and find Dab on their own,” she said.

Brother Dove dropped his altitude and soared below the hilltop. He circled once and then ducked into the mouth of a hidden cave.

Inside the cave, they waited. Rani peered out of the entrance at the sky. She could see the clouds, but she was hidden from them. The fluffy rain clouds began to mill around, bumping into one another like anxious, agitated sheep. They moved uncertainly this way and that. Within minutes, they were a tangled, roiling gray mass.

Thunder began to echo through the valley. It grew louder and louder, reverberating through the cave. Jagged lightning flashed. Rain poured down in sheets.

Rani peered out of the cave. The wind whipped her long hair in every direction. She grabbed on to a blade of grass to keep from blowing away.

This was terrible. She couldn't let it go on. If the clouds didn't calm down, they might cause another hurricane. *Besides*, Rani thought guiltily, *I promised I would be a good cloud keeper*. She had to honor that promise.

"Let's go," she told Brother Dove. He whisked her out of the cave. "Fly toward the rain clouds," she said. "But slowly. We don't want to spook them."



Brother Dove flew gently into the fluffy mass of clouds. The cloudy air was cold and wet on Rani's cheeks. Tiny bits of ice grazed her skin.

"I'm here," Rani said in a soothing voice. "I'm here. Everything is going to be fine." She reached out her hand to pat one of the clouds. Her hand sank into nothingness. But the clouds seemed to sense her presence. They calmed down.

"Come on," she said. "Let's go home."

The thunder began to die out. The lightning faded away. The hurling sheets of rain slowed to a light patter. Rani and Brother Dove flew back toward Pixie Hollow, the flock of rain clouds following behind them.

As they approached the Home Tree, Rani could see lots of fairies busy outside. They were gardening, dancing, and hanging laundry out to dry.

They were not going to be happy to see the rain return. Nope. They were not going to be happy at all.





RANI LOOKED AT each and every one of the shells in her collection. Were there any treasures among them? Treasures that everyone would envy and want to possess?

Rani held her conch shell to her ear. She listened to the sound of the ocean. This shell was a treasure, but only to her. It had been a gift from the water fairy Silvermist. It was the first gift Rani had received when she arrived in Never Land.

There was a knock on the door, and Rani hurried to open it. Prilla stood on her doorstep. She wore a rain hat and a slicker made from a lily pad, and she carried a petal umbrella. Despite the fact that she was as cold and damp as the other fairies, Prilla had a big smile on her face. “Ready to search for treasure?”

“I’m ready,” Rani replied. “First stop, Aiden’s crown repair shop. If there are any rare or precious jewels in Pixie Hollow, that will be the place to find them.”



Aiden, the crown-repair sparrow man, was delighted to see Rani and Prilla. “Visitors! To what do I owe the pleasure?”



“We’re taking inventory,” Rani said quickly. “We’re counting all of Pixie Hollow’s treasures. Aside from Queen Clarion’s crown, do you know of any extraspecial jewels?”

Aiden rubbed his hands together. “You bet I do. Take a look at these.” He reached for a wooden box and turned it upside down. Beautiful gemstones fell onto the table. They twinkled in the light.

Prilla gasped. “Oh, my! They are beautiful. Are they treasures?”

“Yes, of course,” Aiden said. “Look at that moonstone. It used to be the centerpiece of Queen Clarion’s crown.”



Rani reached down and picked up the moonstone. A tiny vein ran across it. "Is that a crack?" she asked.

Aiden nodded. "Yes, a wonderful crack. One day, Tink and Beck were flying with the queen when a hawk came swooping down from out of nowhere."

Prilla gasped. "They could have been killed!"

"That's right," Aiden said. "But quick as lightning, Tink grabbed the crown from Queen Clarion's head. She took that dagger she always wears and pried this big moonstone right out of the crown. Then she tossed the moonstone to Beck. Beck loaded it into her slingshot and—*pow!* She got that old hawk right on his beak."

Rani and Prilla applauded.

"That hawk flew away and never came back. But the impact cracked the moonstone. Queen Clarion said never to fix it. That crack makes the moonstone priceless."

Aiden showed them every jewel in his workshop. He had a story to go with each one. It was almost an hour before Rani and Prilla left the crown-repair shop.

As they stepped outside, Prilla raised her umbrella. Her eyes were bright.

"Well? What do you think?" she asked breathlessly. "Did we find three treasures? Do you want to name them and wish Dab back?"

Rani sighed and shook her head. "Remember all the things we saw on our quest? Hook has bigger and finer jewels on his watch fob alone. Compared to his jewels, ours look like...well, pea gravel."

Prilla's face fell.

"All those jewels are treasures, but only to us. They're treasures because of their history. But they're not treasures that everyone would envy or want to possess," Rani explained.

Prilla snapped her fingers. "I know! What about the pearls in the fountain? The beautiful pearls you brought from the Mermaid Lagoon."

Again, Rani shook her head. "Those pearls are nothing compared to the ones the mermaids wear. Their pearls are ten times the size of any pearl in Pixie Hollow."

“All right then,” Prilla said. “Let’s go look at some art. Maybe we’ll find a treasure or two in Bess’s studio.”



As they approached her studio, Rani and Prilla could hear Bess humming. They knocked on the door. Bess answered with a paintbrush in her hand.

When she saw Rani and Prilla, she grinned. “I’m so glad someone’s come by. I have a new masterpiece to show.”

“Is it a treasure?” Prilla blurted out.

Bess laughed. “Terence would think so.” She stepped back and picked up a piece of sea glass on which she had painted a portrait of Tinker Bell. Light streaming through the sea glass made the painting glow.

Prilla clapped her hands in delight. “How beautiful!”

“Yes,” Bess said. “I’m glad I had this nice piece of sea glass to practice on. Because—” Bess broke off. “Can you keep a secret?”



Rani and Prilla nodded.

“I have something wonderful. Something that will make everyone’s eyes pop,” Bess told them.

Prilla and Rani looked at each other. “Would you call it a treasure?” Prilla asked.

“Oh, yes. Look at this.” Bess went to the corner where something very large was covered with a cloth. She removed the cloth with a flourish to reveal an enormous piece of sea glass. It was almost as big as Bess. “I’m going to paint a portrait of Mother Dove on it.”

Rani’s mouth fell open in amazement. “That piece of sea glass is huge. How did you carry it all the way from the beach?”

“Terence gave me a bit of extra fairy dust in exchange for painting that picture of Tink.” Bess quickly covered the sea glass with the cloth. “Don’t tell a soul about this,” she begged. “I want it to be a surprise.”



Rani and Prilla promised they would keep her secret.

Outside the studio, Prilla looked at Rani expectantly. “Well? What do you think?”

“It’s a lovely piece of sea glass,” Rani told her. “But I’ve seen pieces of sea glass much bigger and smoother.”

Prilla’s normally friendly face darkened. “Why are you being so discouraging about all of the treasures in Pixie Hollow?”

“I’m not!” Rani cried.

“Yes, you are,” Prilla fumed. “You know what? I think you don’t *want* to find Pixie Hollow’s treasures. Because deep down you really want the rain to stay forever, even though it’s making the rest of us miserable.” And with that, Prilla burst into tears.

Rani felt tears forming in her own eyes. “Oh, no! Prilla! Why would you say such a thing? You must know that’s not true.”

Prilla cried harder. She pulled a leaf-kerchief from her pocket and dabbed at her eyes. “You’re right. I *do* know it’s not true. I don’t have any idea why I said it.”

“I know why you said it. You said it because the rain is making you cranky and sad, just like it’s making everybody cranky and sad.”

Rani handed Prilla her own leafkerchief, which wasn’t much help. Rani’s leafkerchiefs were always damp. She patted Prilla on the shoulder. “There, there,” she said in a soothing tone. “There, there.”

Then suddenly, Rani spied something. She pointed at it, so excited that all she could manage to say was, “*There! There!*”



IN THE DISTANCE, Rani spied a beautiful rainbow.

“That’s it!” Prilla said happily. “There’s always a treasure at the end of a rainbow. Maybe there’s a treasure in Pixie Hollow we don’t know about.”

Rani nodded. “Brother Dove can fly to the top of the rainbow. We can follow it all the way to the end.”

She whistled, and Brother Dove swooped down from a nearby branch. Rani hopped on his back. “Wish me luck, Prilla.”

Brother Dove spread his wings. They flew high up into the clouds. All of Never Land spread out below them—the forests, the shores, the lakes, the streams, and the villages. It was magnificent.

*It might be lonely being the only fairy with no wings*, Rani reflected. *But I wouldn’t trade places with anybody*. She might not have any wings, but no fairy could fly higher.

Up...up...up they went. They were heading for the rainbow’s arch. Finally, they reached the place where white light bent in the mist and reflected all the colors. It was the highest point of the rainbow.

Brother Dove was breathing hard. His wings were losing strength. Luckily, he wouldn’t have to fly any higher. Now they could glide back to

the ground.

Brother Dove arced in the air. He began to follow the rainbow's curve back toward the ground.

Faster and faster they went. The ground seemed to rush toward them. Rani looked down and saw the roof of the fairy-dust mill.

"Aiiiiiieeee!" she screamed.

As Brother Dove slowed, Rani pitched forward off his back. *BANG!* She fell right on top of the thatched roof. The thick straw cushioned her fall, but it was wet. Rani felt the roof give way beneath her.

*CRASH!* Rani fell through the roof. She landed with a *pooof!* right in the middle of a bin full of fairy dust. She flailed and struggled in the dust. Finally, Terence and Jerome leaned over the side of the bin and hauled her out.



Rani blinked her eyes, shaking the dust from her eyelashes. She saw the light fairies Fira, Iridessa, and Luna. They stood with their hands on

their hips, glaring at her. Nearby, Glory and Helios, two young light-talent fairies, burst into a fit of giggles.

But the other light fairies didn't seem amused at all. And Terence and Jerome looked perfectly horrified.

"Rani, what in Never Land are you doing?" Terence asked.

Rani had never been so embarrassed. "Well...I...um...saw the rainbow. And I thought I'd try to find out what was at the end of it."

Fira shook her head. "*We're* at the end of it. We light talents made the rainbow. And now you've ruined our work."

"We've been using light to try to keep the dust dry," Iridessa explained. "When our light mingled with the rain, it created a rainbow."

Rain began dripping through the hole in the roof. Drops splashed into the bin of fairy dust.

"Oh, no!" Jerome shouted. "You've punched a hole in the roof and now the dust is going to get drenched. As if we weren't having enough trouble keeping it dry already."

"Now, now," Terence said. "There's no time for blaming. Quick, get some oilcloth and cover the bins."

Everyone sprang into action.

"Can I help?" Rani asked.

"I think you've done enough already," Fira snapped.

Rani felt her face flush hot and then cold with humiliation and regret. "Then I'll just, um...just..."

She couldn't finish. She ran outside, determined not to cause any more trouble.

But the moment she stepped outside the mill, a gust of wind hit her. It carried her up into the air.

"Help!" Rani cried. "Help!"

The fairy dust that covered her like flour had made her so buoyant she floated. The tiniest puff of wind sent her tossing and turning through the sky like a leaf.

Rani had no wings, so she had no way to control her movements. She tumbled and rolled through the air, going higher and higher. Soon she was lost in the thick fog of the clouds.

Tears ran down Rani's face. She had ruined everything. First, she had brought rain to Pixie Hollow. And now it looked as if she had spoiled Pixie Hollow's supply of fairy dust.

Another gust of wind sent her tumbling. She moved through the sky with the clouds. *Maybe this was the best thing that could have happened*, she thought miserably. *Maybe the clouds and I should blow away for good. Then Pixie Hollow can return to normal.*

Rani thought the other fairies were probably *glad* she had blown away. They would be relieved to be rid of such a troublemaker. And they would be especially happy to be rid of the never-ending rain.

Rani realized that none of those things were really true, but she couldn't help thinking them anyway. She felt miserable.

She began to sob. She was crying so loudly, she almost didn't hear her name.

*"Raniiiiii? Raniiiiii? Where are youuuuuuuu?"*

Rani blinked her tears away. She peered through the foggy mist of the clouds. She couldn't believe her eyes. Here came Brother Dove with Prilla and Fira on his back. The two fairies carried long ropes of woven lemongrass looped over their shoulders.

Prilla unwound one of the ropes. "Tie one end around your belt, so we can take you down," she told Rani.

She tossed the end of the rope to Rani. Rani reached out. But the motion sent her turning over and over.

"Try again!" Fira urged.

They tossed the rope once more. This time, Rani managed to grab it. She tied the end to her belt. "I can't believe it. I thought you were going to leave me up here," she said.





Fira yelped, “Leave you up in the air? Rani! What are you thinking? Of course we wouldn’t leave you.”

Brother Dove, Prilla, and Fira carefully towed her through the air, back to Pixie Hollow. As they approached the ground, Rani saw that several fairies had gathered. They peered up at Rani with worried faces. Queen Clarion was at the very front. Her helper fairies held broad petal umbrellas over her to keep her dry.

Fresh tears rolled down Rani’s cheeks. But this time, they were tears of happiness. The fairies were all concerned about Rani. Despite the rain, they all had come to make sure she was okay.

As soon as Rani’s feet touched the ground, the fairies began to applaud. Rani knew she owed them the truth. She held up her hands and took a deep breath. “I’m safe and sound. And I have something to tell you all....”

Rani told Queen Clarion and the rest of the fairies the whole story of how she came to have the clouds and why they wouldn’t leave.

When she was done, there was a long silence. Rani wondered what would happen next. Would Queen Clarion scold her? Banish her? Blame her for everything that had gone wrong?

Instead, Queen Clarion turned to the rest of the fairies and spoke in a clear, strong voice. “Fairies! You have all heard Rani. I know water sprites. They are mischievous, but they are not wicked. Dab will come back and take these clouds away. But she has posed a riddle and we must solve it.”

The queen waved her arms. “Let us all work together. Go to your rooms. Go to your workshops. Go to your studios. Look in your special hiding places. I want every talent group to bring their treasures to the fairy circle. We have so many treasures! Surely we can find three that everyone would envy and want to possess.”



THE CARPENTER-TALENT fairies quickly raised tent poles in the fairy circle. The weaving-talent fairies brought their sturdiest cloth. Soon, a large canopy covered the entire clearing, protecting it from the rain.

Within an hour of Queen Clarion's announcement, the fairies and sparrow men began to arrive. They displayed their treasures on tables set up beneath the canopy.

Rani had never seen so many wonderful things in one place. The coiffure-talent fairies showed off hair ornaments and combs made from gold and pewter. The garden-talent fairies piled their table high with beautiful flowers and mouth-watering fruit. The table-setting-talent fairies brought out dishes made from porcelain as thin as paper.

"My goodness," Rani said to Prilla as they wandered among the tables. "I didn't know we had so *many* delightful things in Pixie Hollow."

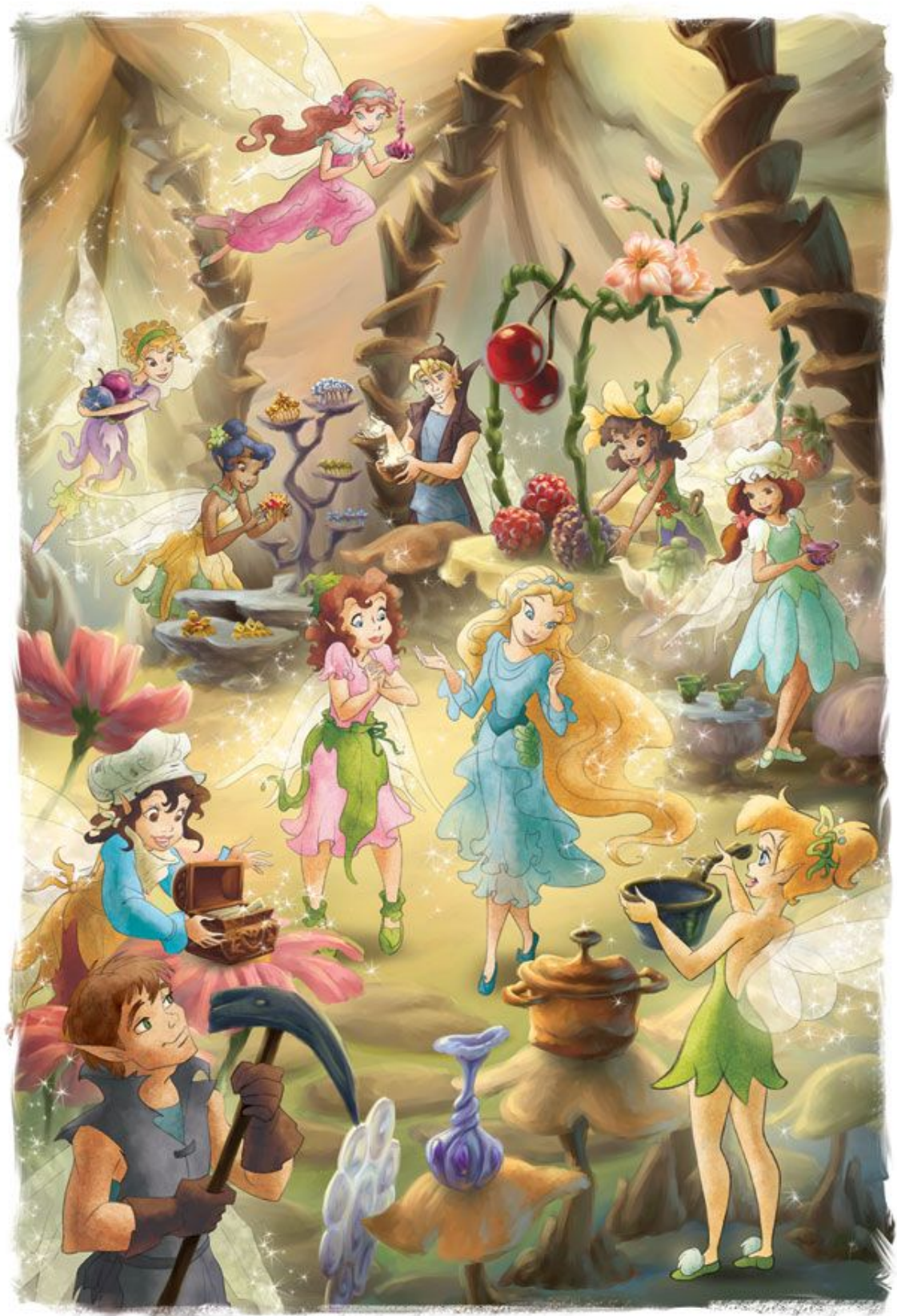
Tinker Bell's table gleamed with kettles, pans, and utensils. She held up a long-handled skillet. "Have you ever seen anything more beautiful than the shape of that handle?" she said in a hushed tone.

Rani smiled and moved on. The fairy circle buzzed with activity as the fairies proudly displayed their treasures. Some had used balloon carriers to bring their offerings through the rain. But some treasures were small and

easy to carry. The cooking-talent fairies didn't even need a whole table. Their most valuable things fit into a little sandalwood box. Their treasures were recipe cards.

It was a wondrous bazaar. The dyeing-talent fairies displayed pots of dye in colors Rani had never even seen before. There were colors so rare they didn't even have a name. One of the dyeing-talent fairies showed her a small vial of vivid pink dye. It was nestled in a silk pouch in a golden box. "It's the only vial of Volcano Pink left in Never Land. This dye was made from the last sunset before the eruption on Torth Mountain."







Rani walked over to the mining-talent fairies' table. The only thing on display was an old pick. Orren, a mining-talent sparrow man, lifted it up. "She's a beauty, isn't she?"

Rani smiled. "Yes. But tell me about it. What makes it a treasure?"

"That's the pick that opened up the biggest vein of Never pewter ever found," he said proudly.

A group of art-talent fairies across the aisle scoffed at him. Bess said, "You're being silly, Orren. A pick isn't a treasure. A pick is a tool. A treasure is something like a painting or a sculpture."

At the next table, Queen Clarion's helpers laid out the queen's favorite shoes, which were made from woven gold threads.

"Now who's being silly," one of them said. "A treasure is something rare. You art-talent fairies turn out a dozen paintings a week. So how can they be treasures? Now *this* is a treasure." She held up a delicate piece of handmade paper.

"What is that?" Rani asked.

"It's an invitation to a ball written in the queen's own hand, using the royal pen. See? The ink is purple and it glitters."

Behind the queen's helper, the sewing-talent fairies laughed. "An invitation! You think an invitation is a treasure? You're quite wrong. A treasure is something that takes time to create. Something that's made with skill and patience and creativity. Look around you. Every single fairy is wearing a beautiful, one-of-a-kind dress made especially for her. Any one of our dresses is more of a treasure than a pick or a painting or a pot or a note."

At this, the light-talent fairies rolled their eyes. "You sewing talents are so conceited," said Luna.

"*We* are not conceited," a sewing-talent fairy retorted. "If anyone is conceited, it's the light talents."



Fira, who was setting out a beautiful glowworm lantern, scowled. “How dare you say that?”

“It’s true,” a passing music-talent fairy agreed. “You light talents always think you’re the most important part of any party. You’re always talking about how you have to rest and worrying about whether or not you’ll have enough energy to glow. As if nothing else is important—not the food, not the dancing, and certainly not the music!” The music-talent fairy angrily folded her prized trumpet flower under her arm and turned away.

Fira stamped her foot. “That’s the meanest thing anybody has ever said. Maybe the light talents just don’t need to come to any more parties.”

“Maybe you don’t,” Dulcie said. “And maybe the music talents don’t need to come either. Everybody knows the most important part of a party is the food. But to hear the sewing talents tell it, the only reason fairies go to parties is so they can dress up.”

“Well, well, well,” a sarcastic voice said. “What’s all this quarreling about?” The fast-flying fairy Vidia touched down in the midst of the arguing fairies.

“Vidia!” Rani exclaimed. “Have you brought your treasures?”

Vidia rolled her eyes. “No, dearest.”

Rani suspected that Vidia’s treasure was her secret stash of stolen fairy dust. Not that Vidia would admit it.

Vidia cast a scornful look around the fairy circle. “Let’s face it, darlings, fairy dust is the only treasure worth having. Everything here is just a bunch of rubbish.”

There were a number of outraged shrieks. Suddenly, the pent-up frustration from all the rainy days overflowed.

The sewing talents accused the laundry talents of deliberately washing their best dresses in hot water so that they shrank. The garden fairies complained that the animal-talent fairies didn’t make one bit of effort to explain to the birds and squirrels why they shouldn’t eat their berries. “From now on, don’t ask us to coax the insects out of your gardens!” the furious animal talents replied.

That angered cricket-whistling-talent fairies. After all, they said, *they* were often the ones who helped coax insects out of the gardens, not the animal fairies.

Soon, every single fairy was angry. Every single fairy felt unappreciated. Every single talent group was ready to take their treasures and go...when a terrible creaking noise brought them all up short.

Tink yelled, “Look at the canopy!”

Rani looked up. “Oh, no!”

While the fairies were arguing, the rain had collected on top of the canopy, causing it to sag. Before anyone could make a move, the entire canopy collapsed. Gallons of water and yards of wet cloth fell down, drenching all the fairies, along with their treasures, big and small.



RANI LOOKED AT the dismal mess. Broken tables, torn cloth, shattered pots, ripped garments, soggy paper, and muddy jewels were scattered everywhere. Every fairy was as upset as could be.

It was the rain that was making everyone so cranky and angry. It was the rain that was making everyone sad and gloomy. It was the rain that was ruining the peace and harmony of Pixie Hollow.

Rani whistled for Brother Dove. The faithful bird soared down. She climbed on his back.

“We’re going to leave for a bit,” she said. “What Pixie Hollow needs is some sunshine and some time to dry out, dry off, and calm down.”

Rani and Brother Dove took to the sky. They circled around the clouds. Rani used the language of water—dots, plops, plinks, and gurgles. She urged the clouds to move quickly.

Brother Dove carried Rani out of the clouds until she was in front of the flock. They flew low over Never Land, leading the rain clouds away from Pixie Hollow and toward the forest.

Rani looked down. She saw the leaves on the trees tremble as the raindrops fell. Some of the trees were a bit brown, she noticed. But after a

splash of rain, they seemed to brighten and stand up straighter.

Rani smiled. It was nice to bring rain where it was wanted and needed.

Rani wondered if other parts of Never Land needed rain. She asked Brother Dove to fly higher so she could get a better view. To the south, she saw a yellow field that should have been green. “That way,” she told Brother Dove.

They flew over the field. Rani and Brother Dove let the clouds hover for hours, giving the field below a nice, long drink.

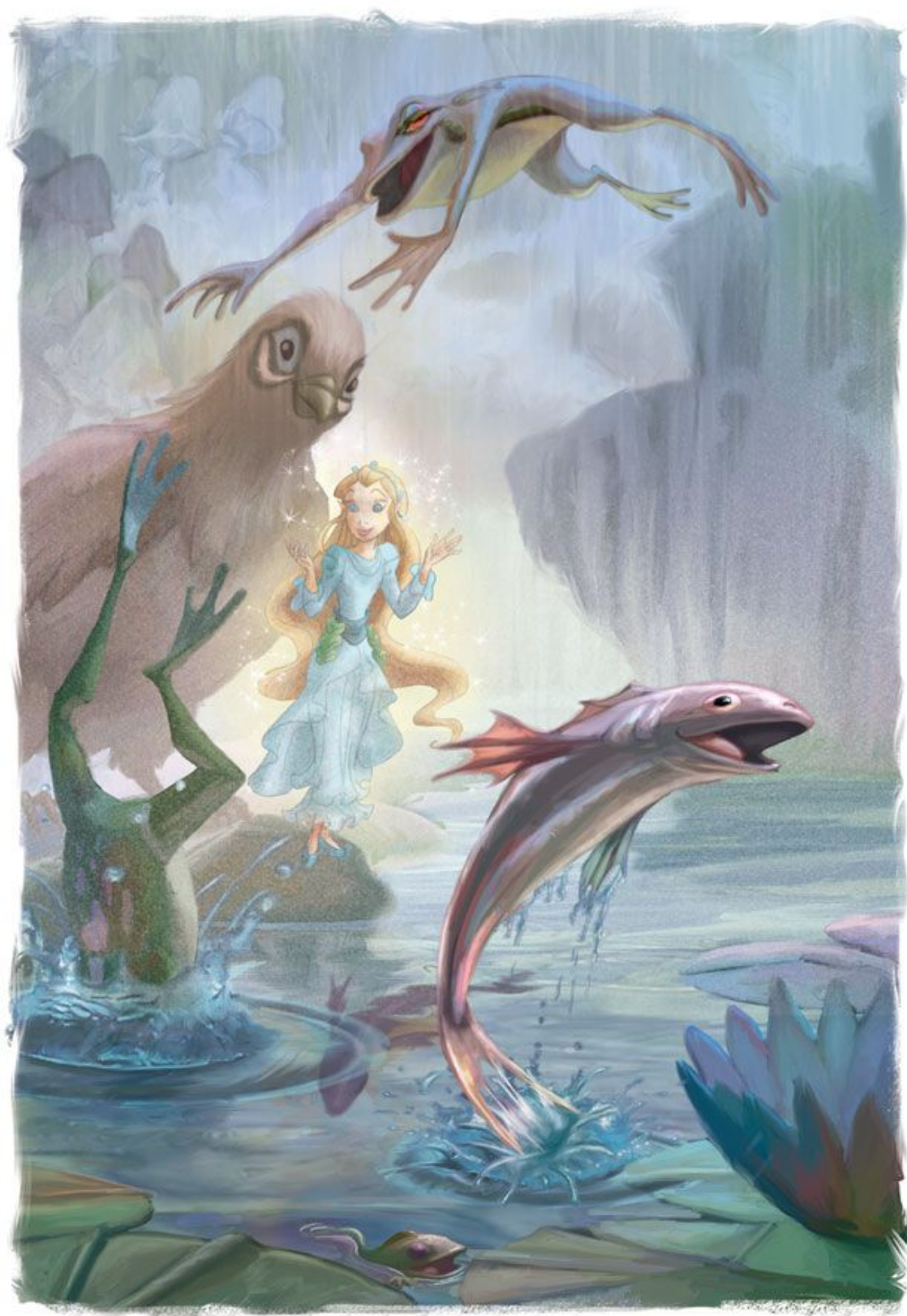
After they watered the field, they flew over a pond that seemed to be drying out. Rani and Brother Dove flew closer. The waterline was dangerously low. In a short time, there wouldn’t be enough water in the pond to keep the fish alive.

So Rani and Brother Dove perched on a nearby tree limb and settled in for a long afternoon. The clouds hovered over the pond, slowly filling it.

As the water in the pond rose, fish jumped. The limp grass along the banks sprang up. Frogs leaped into the water, and schools of tadpoles skittered this way and that just below the surface.

Rani wondered where Dab was. Dab wasn’t a fairy, but she still had an important role to play. Every pond, field, garden, and creature in Never Land depended on rain to stay alive. Herding and moving the rain clouds across Never Land was Dab’s role. If she had been a fairy, it would have been her talent.





Even though Rani wasn't a cloud keeper, bringing rain where it was needed was a way of using her water talent. As Rani thought this, a wave of happiness warmed her from head to toe. It was a wonderful feeling.

"How could Dab abandon her talent?" Rani asked out loud. "Wherever she is, it seems like she would be miserable."

Brother Dove made a noise in his throat. He pulled his wings in tighter.

Rani felt a pang of guilt. Poor Brother Dove. He wasn't a creature of the water, but he had spent the last three days soaked. She reached out and ran her hand down his wet feathers to show her gratitude.

Brother Dove cooed. Rani felt another wave of happiness as she thought of something she could do for him.

Tonight they would go back to the caves. Rani could sleep in the open, so the clouds would see her and stay calm. Brother Dove could sleep inside the cave where he would be warm and dry. She knew he would worry at first, but she would tell him to sleep well.

*As long as I am using my talent to do something good, Rani thought, I will be fine.*



That night, Rani lay on a ledge just outside one of the caves. She stared up into the dark, wet night. Her mind raced, trying every combination of Pixie Hollow treasures she could think of.

*"Hear me, Dab, wherever you are. In the name of Pixie Hollow's three treasures—a paper-thin porcelain tea set, Queen Clarion's handwritten invitation, and Orren's pick—I wish you back...I wish you back...I wish you back!"*



*“Hear me, Dab, wherever you are. In the name of Pixie Hollow’s three treasures—Dulcie’s recipes, Bess’s sea glass, and Vidia’s fairy dust—I wish you back...I wish you back...I wish you back!”*

*“Hear me, Dab, wherever you are. In the name of Pixie Hollow’s three treasures—Lily’s giant buttercups, Fira’s glowworm lantern, and Tink’s skillet—I wish you back... I wish you back... I wish you back!”*

But nothing happened. Eventually, Rani’s eyelids grew heavy and she fell sound asleep.



RANI AND BROTHER Dove traveled around Never Land for four days. Everywhere they went they brought fields to life, restored health to ponds, and made gardens bloom.

Rani always kept her eye out for Dab. Once or twice, she could have sworn she heard Dab's laughter. But if Dab the trickster was near, she had learned to move faster than Rani's eyes could see.

By the end of the fourth day, Rani and Brother Dove headed back to Pixie Hollow. Rani knew what she had to do, and she needed to tell the others.

As they approached Pixie Hollow, Rani could see that the fairy circle had been cleared of debris. Crisp, dry laundry hung from lines strung about the Home Tree. And the garden-talent fairies were tilling the moist soil to plant new seeds.

When they saw Rani coming with the clouds behind her, the fairies scrambled. The laundry-talent fairies plucked clothes off the lines as fast as they could. And the garden fairies darted indoors, dragging their baskets of seeds behind them.







Rani and Brother Dove landed. The fairies came out of their rooms and work spaces to greet them. They carried petal umbrellas and wore slickers.

Prilla came running through the crowd with Tinker Bell close behind her. “You’re back!” Prilla cried happily.

Tink pulled on her bangs. “You can’t imagine how much we missed you,” she said in a gruff voice. Rani knew it was the voice Tink used when she was about to cry but didn’t want anybody to know.

The crowd parted, and Queen Clarion hurried forward. Her helpers tried to keep pace with her and hold an umbrella over her head. But the queen moved too fast. She didn’t care about getting wet.

“Welcome. You have been missed,” she told Rani.

“And I missed all of you,” Rani said. “But as you can see, the clouds are still following me. I haven’t figured out how to make them stop.”

The entire population of Pixie Hollow groaned.

“But don’t worry,” Rani said quickly. “I’m not staying.”

Everyone gasped.

“What do you mean? You *can’t* leave,” Prilla insisted. “You can’t solve a problem by running away from it.”

“I’m not running away,” Rani protested. “But every part of Never Land needs rain eventually. Somebody has to keep these clouds moving and make sure that the rain gets where it needs to be. I guess that somebody is me.”

“But what will we do without you?” Tink asked.

“I’ll come back from time to time. When you need rain,” Rani said. “But when you don’t need rain, I’ll be away.”

Queen Clarion dabbed at her eyes with a gold-edged leafkerchief. “I fear that we have failed you. We have looked for treasure everywhere. And either we cannot find it, or we cannot agree on what it is.”

Rani shook her head. “Don’t feel bad. And don’t worry. I’ll be with the rain. As long as I can use my talent, I’ll be fine.”

Rani looked out at all the sad faces. Already, the rain was beginning to wilt their hairdos and dampen their wings. It was time to pack her things and go.



Twenty minutes later, Rani came out of the Home Tree. She carried a few spare tunics and her special conch shell tucked into a satchel.

Fira came rushing up. “The light talents have something for you to take.” She placed a stone in Rani’s hands. “It’s a glow stone. It stores light during the day and glows in the night. It will give you comfort in the dark.”



Rani was touched. After all the trouble she had caused, it was nice of Fira to worry about her.

A conducting-talent fairy lifted her hands, and all the music talents began to sing. It was the most cheerful melody Rani had ever heard. And it was so tuneful, she knew she would remember every note. "We wrote that especially for you," the conducting fairy told her. "It's a song to sing when you're lonely." Rani was grateful. She knew the tune would come in handy.

Soon, every talent group was pressing something into her hands. A flint for starting a fire. A bit of extra fairy dust. A warm dress with a hood. Her favorite cookies.

Finally, Rani was ready to go. She was happy. She was content. And she felt brave and eager for adventure. But when she saw Prilla and Tink's faces, she thought her heart might break.

"Let's go, Brother Dove," she whispered. "Let's go quickly before we all start to cry." Rani didn't mind crying in front of the other fairies. She did it all the time. But she knew Tink hated for anyone to see her cry.

Brother Dove spread his wings. But before he and Rani could take off, Tink came running toward them. "Wait!" she shouted. "Wait!"

Brother Dove lowered his wings.

"I'm going with you," Tink said, panting. "To keep you company."

"But you can't stand being wet," Rani argued.

"I'll just have to get used to it. Besides, it's not forever. We'll be back in a few weeks because Pixie Hollow will need the rain."

"That's right," Prilla said. "And when you leave the next time, *I'll* go with you."

"We'll take turns!" Fira cried. "So you'll never be without a friend while you're away."

Rani began to cry. She had never been so touched. Yes, having a talent was wonderful. But she realized now that without friendship, life would be very lonely.

Another wave of happiness warmed Rani from head to toe. "Okay, Tink," she said. "Get your gear and let's go. It will be fun."

At that moment, Beck came flying rapidly toward them. "Wait up! Wait! Mother Dove wants to see Rani before she leaves!"



“NOW, TELL ME everything from start to finish,” Mother Dove instructed. She settled herself on her blue egg and fixed Rani with a kindly eye.

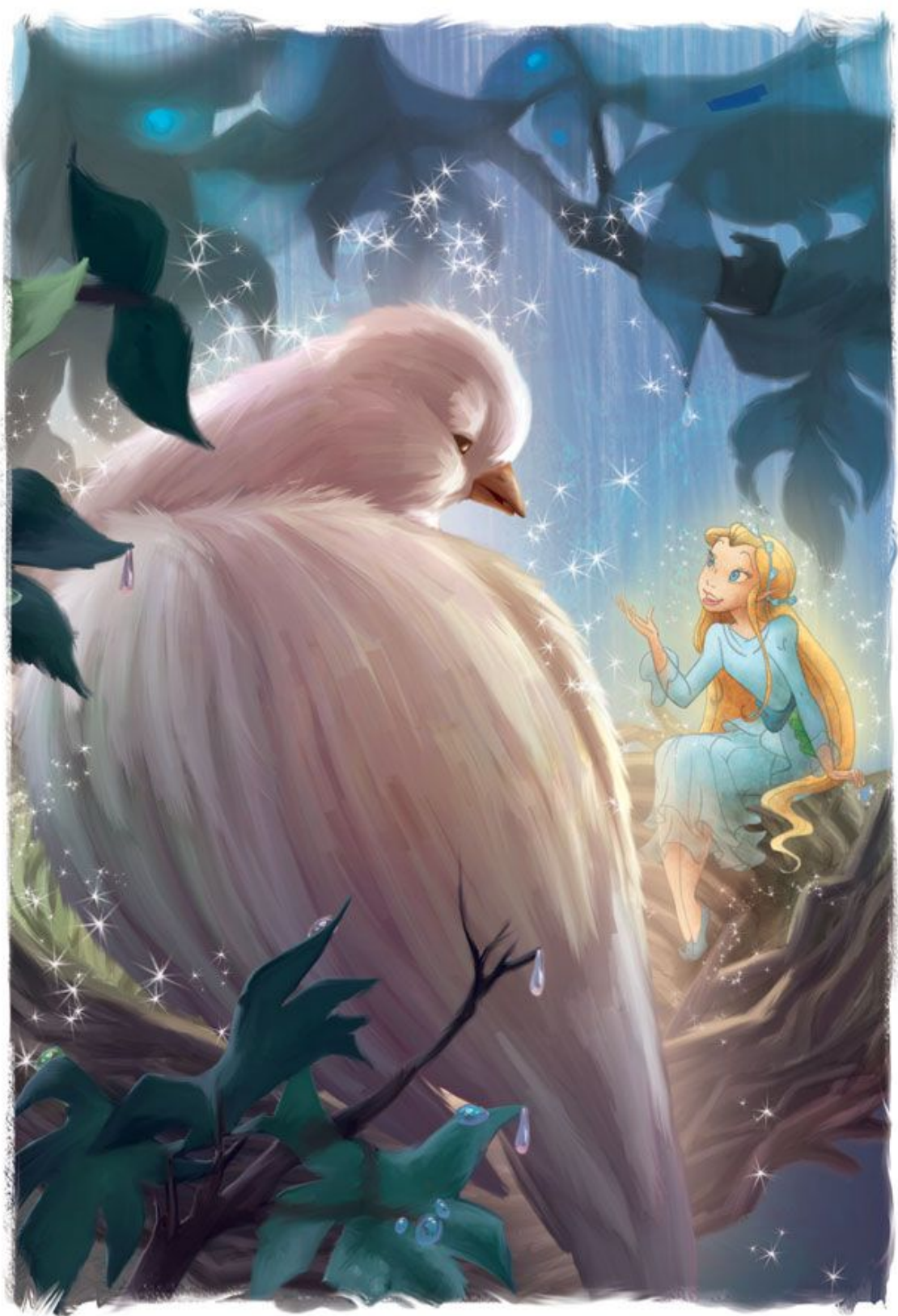
Rani sat down on the edge of Mother Dove’s nest. She told her the whole story. She ended with a sigh. “I’d fly backward if I could, but I can’t. I can only fly forward. So that’s what I’m going to do. I just hope you’ll forgive me for causing so much trouble.”

Mother Dove’s feathers ruffled. “Rani, my dear, that’s why I wanted you to come. So that I could tell you this myself. No matter what you’ve done, no matter where you are, I will love you.”

Another wave of warm happiness washed through Rani from head to toe.

“I would tell most fairies setting out on an adventure to stay safe and stay dry.” Mother Dove chuckled. “But to you, I will just say *stay safe and stay happy*.”

“I *am* happy,” Rani said gaily. “Isn’t that odd? This should be the saddest day of my life. But I don’t feel a bit sorry. In fact, I’ve never been so happy.”





Mother Dove moved her wings a bit. “Oh? Why do you think that is?”

Rani thought hard. “Well, I guess because it’s impossible to be unhappy when you know you have talent, friendship, and love. What more could you want? What more could you need? As long as you have those three things you...” Rani broke off. Her mouth fell open. Her eyes widened.

Mother Dove said nothing, but her own eyes twinkled.

Rani drew in her breath with a gasp. “Oh, Mother Dove,” she whispered. “That’s it, isn’t it?”

Mother Dove chuckled.

“I’ve done it, haven’t I? I’ve guessed the three treasures.”

“There is only one way to find out,” Mother Dove said.

Rani lifted her face and called out as loudly as she could: “*Hear me, Dab, wherever you are. In the name of Pixie Hollow’s three treasures—talent, friendship, and love—I wish you back...I wish you back...I wish you back!*”

A huge clap of thunder shook the nest. It was followed by the sound of water pouring over a waterfall. Dab’s bubbling laughter filled the air. And in a flash, she appeared, as shimmering as ever.

“Well!” she exclaimed. “I was beginning to give up on you. I can’t believe you took so long to figure it out. Maybe fairies aren’t as smart as I thought.”

Rani laughed so hard that tears rolled down her cheeks. “I was looking for *things*,” she said.

Dab snorted. “*Things!* Who cares about things? Everybody has *things*. Those aren’t the treasures everyone envies and wishes they possessed. Everyone knows that the fairies are happy. And they are happy because they have talent, friendship, and love. So cherish your treasures, my friend. And don’t make any more bargains with water sprites,” she cautioned.

Dab wickered from nest to bush, then from ground to sky. Rani heard her talking to her clouds in the magic language of water—full of dots, plops, plinks, and gurgles.

Dab was gathering her clouds, calling them, herding them. Rani watched her work, admiring her bright quickness. Soon, the gray clouds were on the move.

Rani waved. But she didn't know if Dab waved back or not, because for the first time in days, the sun was shining in her eyes.

